

Program and Notes for Joseph Johnson's October 9, 2016 Performance

PROGRAM

Cello Suite No. 1 in G Major, BWV 1007. J.S. Bach

Prelude
Allemande
Courante
Sarabande
Minuet I and II
Gigue

Cello Suite No. 3, op. 87. Benjamin Britten

The Third Suite is in nine movements, performed without pause:

Introduzione: Lento

Marcia: Allegro

Canto: Con Moto

Barcarolla: Lento

Dialogo: Allegretto

Fuga: Andante espressivo

Recitativo: Fantastico

Moto perpetuo: Presto

Passacaglia: Lento solenne

INTERMISSION

Pagina Elegiaca Manuel de Elias
- Dolente, Liberamente

Homerica Manuel de Elias
- Lentamente, senza rigare

Cello Suite No. 3 in C Major, BWV 1009. J.S. Bach

Prelude
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Cello Suite No. 1 in G Major, BWV 1007 by Johann Sebastian Bach

This suite for unaccompanied cello is remarkable in that it achieves the effect of implied three- to four-voice contrapuntal and polyphonic music in a single musical line. It is the first of a series of six suites for unaccompanied cello by Bach. As usual in a Baroque musical suite, each movement is based around a baroque dance type. Preludes are often virtuosic and rhythmically free, serving as introductions to the individual character of each suite. The second movement of each suite is an Allemande, which originated in sixteenth-century Germany as a lively dance, but by Bach's time was generally set at an elegantly slow tempo. Courante is a lively, fast-paced dance that was popular in various regions of Europe in Bach's time. Bach always employs a pair of popular French court dances, choosing the Minuet for this suite. The sixth and last movement of each suite is a lively Gigue, which has a faster tempo than any other movement and playfully concludes the suite.

Due to the work's technical demands, étude-like nature, and difficulty in interpretation because of the non-annotated nature of the surviving copies, this cello suite, along with the other five, was little known and rarely publicly performed until revived and recorded by Pablo Casals in the early 20th century when Baroque instruments were no longer readily available. Cellists have been performing this suite on modern instruments since its arrival in the cello repertoire.

Cello Suite No. 3, op. 87 by Benjamin Britten

Britten's beautiful and erratic work was without a doubt inspired by Bach, but more importantly, it was a gift from Britten to one of his dearest friends, cello virtuoso Mstislav Rostropovich. Bach wrote his unaccompanied cello suite circa 1720 and Britten composed this cello suite in 1971, inspired by Rostropovich's playing of the unaccompanied cello suites of Bach. Rostropovich first performed the suite in December 1974. Rostropovich recorded half of the Bach suites in 1956 when he was 29, and re-recorded all six forty years later. He expressed his long-lasting adoration of the pieces in a 1991 interview when he said, "Nothing in the world is more precious to me than these suites."

Composition of Benjamin Britten's cello suites also occurred at a juncture in which the composer returned to writing instrumental music. Despite composing a great deal of instrumental music early in his career, Benjamin Britten became a composer of primarily vocal music in his mature career. Other composers were using an obsolete musical framework, with terminology that was archaic for their time. Baroque dance suites were old-fashioned by the time Bach wrote the cello suites. In the case of Britten, there is a two-fold reference to the past: by the later 20th century, Bach's cello suites had become canonized in the musical repertoire. They were so well known that all new works in this genre would inevitably be subject to comparison.

All six of Britten's cello suites are highly technically challenging, featuring difficult double stops, intricate passage work, *col legno* (in which the strings are struck with the wooden upper portion of the bow), rapid string crossings, delicate natural harmonics, and extensive use of the cello's uppermost register.

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Pagina Elegiaca by Manuel de Elías

Homérica by Manuel de Elías

Manuel de Elías, born in June 1939, is a Mexican composer of mostly stage, orchestral, chamber, choral, vocal, and piano works that have been performed throughout the Americas and in Europe. He is also active as a conductor. De Elías studied composition, music theory, piano, early music, recorder, organ, violin, cello, electronic music, and conducting. He wrote *Homérica* for cello in 1996.

Cello Suite No. 3 in C Major, BWV 1009 by Johann Sebastian Bach

This is the third of Bach's series of six suites for unaccompanied cello. The Prelude of this suite consists of an A–B–A–C form, with A being a scale-based movement that eventually dissolves into an energetic arpeggio part; and B, a section of demanding chords. It then returns to the scale theme, and ends with a powerful and surprising chord movement.

The Allemande is the only movement in the suites that has an up-beat consisting of three sixteenth notes instead of just one, which is the standard form.

Bach always employs a pair of popular French court dances, choosing the Bourrée for this suite. The second Bourrée, though in C minor, has a 2-flat (or G minor) key-signature. This notation, common in pre-Classical music, is sometimes known as a partial key-signature. The first and second Bourrée of this suite are sometimes used as solo material for other bass instruments such as the tuba, euphonium, trombone, and bassoon.

The six cello suites have been transcribed for numerous solo instruments, including the violin, viola, double bass, viola da gamba, mandolin, piano, marimba, classical guitar, recorder, flute, electric bass, horn, saxophone, clarinet, bassoon, trumpet, trombone, euphonium, tuba, ukulele, and charango. They have been transcribed and arranged for orchestra as well.